

TRAVELERS TO THE NEW NATIONS

1. Uwagi ogólne

Adresatem tych ćwiczeń są studenci kierunków humanistycznych, w szczególności polonistyki i kulturoznawstwa.

2. Poziom zaawansowania: B2+

3. Czas trwania opisanych ćwiczeń: 90 minut

4. Cele dydaktyczne

Celem jest doskonalenie umiejętności analizy tekstu, a także poszerzenie słownictwa. Tekst jest źródłem kilku interesujących informacji o dziewiętnastowiecznej Ameryce.

5. Uwagi i sugestie

Warto poprosić studentów o przeczytanie tego tekstu przed zajęciami w domu. Zanim zaczniemy na zajęciach czytać wspólnie tekst, można przeprowadzić (np. w małych grupach) quiz związany z Henrykiem Sienkiewiczem. Później czytamy głośno tekst, komentujemy poszczególne wątki i robimy ćwiczenia słownikowe.

TRAVELERS TO THE NEW NATION: HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ (1846-1916)

- 1 HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1905 for his novel *Quo Vadis*, was thirty years old when he sailed for America in 1876. At that time, he was already a well-established columnist for a Warsaw newspaper, „Gazeta Polska”. It was a difficult time in Polish history. The **uprising** of 1863 for Polish independence had failed, and the country was still **partitioned** among Prussia, Austria, and Russia.

In this pessimistic political climate, Sienkiewicz and a group of his fellow intellectuals – among them Count Charles Chlapowski and his wife, the famous actress Helena Modjeska – became interested in America. Intrigued by the approaching Centennial Exposition, they had the idea of founding a Utopian colony modeled on the Brook Farm community of Transcendentalists in New England. Sienkiewicz, who had been reading a romantic account of California by the Polish journalist Julian Horain, was chosen, with Julius Sypniewski, another member of the group, to scout an appropriate location in that state.

- 15 Sienkiewicz arrived in centennial America in March 1876 and, after a few days’ stay in New York, took a transcontinental train to San Francisco.

His earliest letters from America were not sympathetic to the new country. Making the same mistake which most foreign visitors make today, he judged America at first by what he saw in New York. The city disappointed him. There were too many hotels and banks and no historical monuments:

- You must look for history of the United States in Washington; in New York you will find only merchants. Business, business, business, from morning till night, that is all you see, read, and hear (...). Wealth is the chief criterion by which men are measured, and even the idiom of the language reflects this sentiment. Here people do not say a man has a certain amount of money, but that he is worth so many thousands.*

Sienkiewicz was offended, too, by the filth and corruption of the city. No city spent as much as did New York for the maintenance of order and **municipal** services, yet it was ‘a hundred times dirtier’ than other cities: “I predict at the outset that all the efforts of the Warsaw municipal authorities to compete with New York in untidiness will be of no avail”. And so skilled were New York’s municipal thieves that “European corruption pales into insignificance”.

Sienkiewicz’s views on America underwent a certain evolution. After his initial bad impression, he gradually became more optimistic: “I can only repeat that while not shutting my eyes to the darker aspects of American society, the longer and more closely I observe it, the brighter it appears to me”. He liked his neighbours in California and marveled at the prosperity:

One cannot speak here of poverty in the same sense as one does in Europe, where it is synonymous with hunger. In Anaheim I was told, for example, that Brown or

40 *Harrison or Down was extremely poor. But what does this mean?(...) Is this person on the point of starvation? Far from it! He eats meat three times per day and has wine with his meals, for this is the least expensive drink here. Why, then, is he considered poor? Simply because he does not have on hand a hundred dollars in cash! Good heavens! How many literary figures, lawyers, and doctors do I know*
45 *in Warsaw (...) none of whom has on hand a hundred dollars in cash! But we do not call this poverty, and certainly not destitution (...). Destitution in Poland makes teeth chatter from cold, blots bodies from hunger; it begs, steals, and murders.*

Sienkiewicz was acutely sensitive to the benefits of American democracy. "It exists," he wrote, "not only as an institution and a theory, but also in men's relations
50 with one another".

He was somewhat naïve about the American social structure: "Everybody here stands on the same social level, with no one towering above another". Though he was partly right in his belief that social classes in the European sense did not exist in America, it is difficult to understand why he failed to notice any social ladder in the United States.
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The second element of American democracy was the accessibility of education. Sienkiewicz felt that the average American was not a learned person; but he was impressed by the fact that education was more widespread and more evenly distributed in America than in Europe: "*The mental development of the people is*
60 *more uniform, and mutual understanding is therefore more easily achieved.*" There was, however, a price to pay. He was critical of the intellectual level of Americans and found newspapers in the United States inferior to European ones: "*In Poland a newspaper subscription tends to satisfy purely intellectual needs 60 and is regarded as somewhat of a luxury which the majority of the people can heroically*
65 *forego; in the United States a newspaper is regarded as a basic need of every person, indispensable as bread itself.*"

The third factor of American democracy, according to Sienkiewicz, was "the lack of marked disparity in manners". In Europe, he observed, the upper class differed from the lower not only in wealth and education, but also in manners: "Knowl-
70 edge may not be so profound nor good manners so refined in the United States as in Europe but both are certainly more widely diffused." And this was the essence of American democracy.

As a reporter, Sienkiewicz knew that his readers back home would be very interested in the social customs of the Americans, and particularly in those which
75 differed from their own. His first impressions were not favourable. He noted: "the disgusting custom" of chewing tobacco: "*If you glance at any group of people you will notice that majority of the men are moving their jaws rhythmically, as though they were some species of ruminating animals.*" He was astonished to see men at the dinner table with their hats on. "*They do not take off their hats even in private*
80 *homes, and yet they remove their coats everywhere, even in the presence of ladies or in places where dignity would require otherwise.*" It shocked him to see Americans reading newspapers with their feet propped up on the table, or leaving the

table at the end of a meal without expressing thanks to fellow diners. And he found American eating customs disgraceful:

- 85 *According to American custom, numerous porcelain dishes filled with a variety of foods are placed simultaneously before the guest. You have before you all at one time soup, meats, fish, eggs, puddings, tomatoes, potatoes, ice cream, strawberries, apples, almonds, coffee – in a word, a countless variety of dishes in small servings. Begin with whatever dish you please, eat what you like; nobody*
 90 *pays any attention to you. A Negro stands over you like an executioner over a condemned man. He keeps filling your glass with ice water whenever you take a sip and replies invariably, “Yes, sir!” to all your requests. As a result of this mode of serving, everything you eat is cold, stale, and unappetizing, even in the best restaurants. American cuisine is the worst on earth. It ignores all consideration for*
 95 *your health and well-being in order to speed you through your meal so that you can return as quickly as possible to business.*

- He concludes that this lack of graciousness “makes even the most enthusiastic admirer of the Americans admit that in this respect European nations surpass the United States.” He admitted, however, that the observation was superficial.
 100 Americans possessed many fine qualities, “but these can be appreciated only after closer acquaintance”.

- These are only a few of Sienkiewicz’s thoughts. His letters create a much more detailed and **diverse** portrait of America. His descriptions of landscapes, for example, are remarkable. He also discussed Polish-American communities in the United States
 105 and recorded their attempts to preserve their native culture. In a melancholy mood, he concluded that:

- sooner or later they will forget. They will change everything, even their names, which English teeth find too difficult to chew and which interfere with business. How long this will take is difficult to say. But just as Poland disappeared, so will*
 110 *this same, sad fate inevitably befall her children who, today, are scattered throughout the world.*

- But Sienkiewicz felt that his poverty-stricken countrymen had radically improved their lives. For all the costs, and whatever America’s shortcomings, the New World was finer than the Old. “If I were asked,” Sienkiewicz wrote,
 115 “which society has produced the better civilization, I should without hesitation **concede** superiority to the American.” He thought that the main task of civilization was to promote happiness. “We must admit that the opportunity for happiness is incomparably greater in America than anywhere in Europe. American democracy approaches nearest that ideal society for which he have
 120 striven through the ages”.

Source: fragments from *Travelers to the New Nation 1776-1914*, chapter: Henryk Sienkiewicz by Longin Pastusiak, 1976.

GLOSSARY

UPRISING – an act of opposition, sometimes using violence, by many people in one area of a country against those who are in power:

Following a determined resistance in the east, there was eventually a popular **uprising** in the capital.

PARTITION – the dividing of a country into separate countries or areas of government:

The **partition** of India occurred in 1948.

FILTH – thick, unpleasant dirt:

The floor was covered in **filth**.

MUNICIPAL – of or belonging to a town or city:

municipal authorities.

DESTITUTION – the state of having little or no money and few or no material possessions,

– destitute – without money, food, a home or possessions:

The floods left thousands of people **destitute**.

DISPARITY – a lack of equality and similarity, especially in a way that is not fair:

The growing **disparity** between rich and poor.

PROFOUND – felt or experienced very strongly or in an extreme way:

His mother's death when he was aged six had a very **profound** effect on him.

RUMINATE – to bring up food from the stomach and chew it again:

Cows, sheep, and deer are ruminants/**ruminant** animals.

PROP UP – to support something physically, often by leaning it against something else or putting something under it:

I **propped** my bike (up) against the wall.

SERVING – an amount of one type of food which is given to one person:

The quantities given in the recipe should be enough for four **servings**.

SIP – to drink, taking only a very small amount at a time:

This tea is very hot, so **sip** it carefully.

She slowly **sipped** (at) her wine.

STALE – no longer new or fresh, usually as a result of being kept for too long:

The bread/biscuits/cake had gone **stale**.

The morning after the party, their apartment smelled of **stale** cigarette smoke.

GRACIOUSNESS – excellence of manners or social conduct / good manners, courtesy.

GRACIOUS = pleasant; behaving in a pleasant, polite, calm way:

a **gracious** smile.

He was **gracious** enough to thank me.

The losing team were **gracious** in defeat.

DIVERSE – varied or different:

Students from countries as **diverse** as Colombia and Lithuania use Cambridge textbooks when they learn English.

New York is a very culturally/ethnically **diverse** city.

STRICKEN – suffering severely from the effects of something unpleasant:

All the oil from the **stricken** tanker has now leaked into the sea.

My country has been **stricken** by war for the past five years.

SHORTCOMING – a fault or a failure to reach a particular standard:

Whatever his **shortcomings** as a husband, he was a good father to his children.

Like any political system, it has its **shortcomings**.

CONCEDE – to admit, often unwillingly, that something is true:

The Government has **conceded** (that) the new tax policy has been a disaster.

“Well okay, perhaps I was a little hard on her,” he **conceded**.

STRIVE – to try very hard to do something or to make something happen, especially for a long time or against difficulties:

Mr Roe has kindled expectations that he must now **strive** to live up to.

In her writing she **strove** for a balance between innovation and familiar prose forms.

STUDENT'S COPY – EXERCISES

1. From the following list of words choose the best one for each sentence. You may need to change the form of some words.

concede *prop* *profound* *diverse* *strive*
stale *stricken* *uprising* *serving* *disparity*

1. In her writing she for a balance between innovation and familiar prose forms.
2. All the oil from the tanker has now leaked into the sea.
3. New York is a very ethnically city.
4. The quantities given in the recipe should be enough for four
5. I my bike against the wall.
6. It is very important to narrow the economic among regions and industries.
7. The Government has that the new tax policy has been a disaster.
8. The morning after the party, their apartment smelled of cigarette smoke.
9. His mother's death when he was aged six had a very effect on him.
10. Following a determined resistance in the east, there was eventually a popular in the capital.

2. Match the definitions (1-15) to the words (A-O)

1. to admit, often unwillingly, that something is true: [...]
2. varied or different: [...]
3. to try very hard to do something or to make something happen, especially for a long time or against difficulties: [...]
4. no longer new or fresh, usually as a result of being kept for too long: [...]
5. to divide a country into separate countries or areas of government: [...]
6. of or belonging to a town or city: [...]
7. the state of having little or no money and few or no material possessions: [...]
8. a lack of equality and similarity, especially in a way that is not fair: [...]
9. felt or experienced very strongly or in an extreme way: [...]
10. to bring up food from the stomach and chew it again: [...]
11. support by placing against something solid or rigid: [...]
12. an amount of one type of food which is given to one person: [...]
13. excellence of manners or social conduct: [...]
14. suffering severely from the effects of something unpleasant: [...]
15. a fault or a failure to reach a particular standard: [...]

A. ruminate, B. municipal, C. stale, D. serving, E. partition, F. stricken, G. graciousness, H. destitution, I. strive (strove, striven), J. concede, K. profound, L. diverse, M. shortcoming, N. prop, O. disparity

3. Without looking back into the text find words that go together:

1. ruminating	A. at the prosperity
2. fate	B. observation
3. incomparably	C. variety
4. superficial	D. a luxury
5. take	E. as bread itself
6. countless	F. animals
7. forego	G. befalls you
8. indispensable	H. of no avail
9. marvel	I. greater
10. be	J. a sip

Answers:

1. [...], 2. [...], 3. [...], 4. [...], 5. [...], 6. [...], 7. [...], 8. [...], 9. [...], 10. [...]

4. Put the words below the text back into the text:

The third factor of American democracy, according to Sienkiewicz, was “the lack of marked disparity in manners”. In Europe, he observed, the upper class differed from the lower not only in wealth and education, but also in manners: “Knowledge may not be so (1) nor good manners so (2) in the United States as in Europe but both are certainly more widely diffused.” And this was the (3) of American democracy.

As a reporter, Sienkiewicz knew that his readers back home would be very interested in the social customs of the Americans, and (4) in those which differed from their own. His first impressions were not favourable. He noted: “the (5) custom” of chewing tobacco: “If you glance at any group of people you will notice that majority of the men are moving their (6) rhythmically, as (7) they were some (8) of ruminating animals.” He was astonished to see men at the dinner table with their hats on. “They do not take off their hats even in private homes, and yet they remove their coats everywhere, even in the presence of ladies or in places where dignity would require otherwise.” It shocked him to see Americans reading newspapers with their feet (9) up on the table, or leaving the table at the end of a meal without expressing thanks to fellow diners. And he found American eating customs disgraceful.

<i>particularly</i>	<i>though</i>	<i>species</i>	<i>jaws</i>	<i>propped</i>
<i>profound</i>	<i>refined</i>	<i>essence</i>		<i>disgusting</i>

5. Change the form of the words in brackets so that they fit the context:

He concludes that this lack of (1) [grace] “makes even the most (2) [enthuse] admirer of the Americans admit that in this respect European nations surpass the United States.” He admitted, however, that the (3) [observe] was superficial. Americans possessed many fine qualities, “but these can be appreciated only after closer (4) [acquaint]”.

These are only a few of Sienkiewicz’s (5) [think]. His letters create a much more detailed and diverse portrait of America. His (6) [describe] of landscapes, for example, are remarkable. He also discussed Polish-American communities in the United States and recorded their attempts to preserve their native culture. In a melancholy mood, he concluded that *sooner or later they will forget. They will change everything, even their names, which English teeth find too difficult to chew and which interfere with business. How long this will take is difficult to say. But just as Poland disappeared, so will this same, sad fate* (7) [inevitable] *befall her children who, today, are scattered throughout the world.*

6. Discuss with your partner the following questions:

- According to Sienkiewicz, which three factors were essential for the development of a democratic society?
- What is the difference between European and American poverty?
- Describe American eating habits.
- What does Sienkiewicz write about American manners?
- What is the writer’s final conclusion about life in America?

TEACHER'S COPY – EXERCISES

1.

1. strove or: strives, 2. stricken, 3. diverse, 4. servings, 5. propped or: have propped, 6. disparities, 7. conceded, 8. stale, 9. profound, 10. uprising

2.

1. [J], 2. [L], 3. [I], 4. [C], 5. [E], 6. [B], 7. [H], 8. [O], 9. [K], 10. [A], 11. [N], 12. [D], 13. [G], 14. [F], 15. [M]

3.

1. ruminating – F; 2. fate – G; 3. incomparably – I; 4. superficial – B; 5. take – J; 6. countless – C; 7. forego – D; 8. indispensable – E; 9. marvel – A; 10. be – H

4.

1. profound, 2. refined, 3. essence, 4. particularly, 5. disgusting, 6. jaws, 7. though, 8. species, 9. propped

5.

1. graciousness, 2. enthusiastic, 3. observation, 4. acquaintance, 5. thoughts, 6. description, 7. inevitably

6.

Answers:

- a. The non-existence of social class, the accessibility of education for all, the sameness of manners = the absence of ritual conduct.
- b. Europe: "(...) teeth chatter from cold, hunger, all that results in begging, thefts and crime".
America: "(...) one hundred dollars on hand", three meals a day.
- c. A variety of foods placed simultaneously on the table. Everything is in small servings everything is eaten quickly.
- d. People chew tobacco, sit at the table with hats on, remove coats everywhere even in the presence of ladies. They prop up feet on the table while reading newspapers, they don't express thanks to fellow diner after a meal.
- e. The New World was finer than the Old. American civilization promoted happiness. Sienkiewicz praises American democracy.